

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00  
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PA-01 /059 W  
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P R 011916Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7186  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO  
DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, ES  
SUBJECT: BPR DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED FEBRUARY 28 THWARTED BY  
GOES SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

REF: SAN SALVADOR 0889

1. POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR), A LEFTIST GROUPING INCLUDING CAMPESINOS, TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, HAD PUBLICIZED A DEMONSTRATION TO BE HELD QTE IN HONOR OF THE MARTYRS WHO GAVE UP THEIR LIVES ON FEBRUARY 28, 1977 UNQTE (SEE REFTTEL). DEMONSTRATION WAS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN PARQUE LIBERTAD (SAME LOCATION AS 1977 DEMONSTRATION) AT 5 P.M. FEBRUARY 28.
2. ON MORNING FEBRUARY 28, GOES ISSUED STATEMENT THAT NO MANIFESTATION OR PUBLIC GATHERING HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED FOR THAT DAY AND THEREFORE ANY SUCH ACT WOULD BE CONSIDERED A VIOLATION OF THE NEW LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER.

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3. GOES SECURITY FORCES BEGINNING EARLY SAME MORNING TOOK ELABORATE PRECUATIONS TO INSURE THAT SUCH A DMONSTRATION WOULD IN FACT NOT TAKE PLACE. SECURITY PRECAUTIONS INCLUDED CONTINUAL AERIAL SURVEILLANCE BY MILITARY HELICOPTERS AND SMALL FIXED-WING ARICRAFT TO SPOT CONCENTRATIONS OF PEOPLE IN CITY. CUSTOMS POLICE AIDED BY NATIONAL GUARD SET UP ROAD BLOCKS ON ALL MAJOR HIGHWAYS ENTERING CITY AND RRESTED BETWEEN 150 AND 200 CAMPESINOS,

MANY OF WHOM POLICE ASSERT WERE ARMED. NEWSPAPER REPORTS MARCH 1 STATE THAT ALL OR MOST OF THOSE DETAINED WERE RELEASED LATE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 28. NATIONAL POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD COMPLETELY SURROUNDED PARQUE LIBERTAD AND OTHER NEARBY PUBLIC SQUARES. POLICE PERMITTED TRAFFIC TO PASS THROUGH BUT WOULD NOT ALLOW PEDESTRIANS TO REMAIN IN THE AREA. MILITARY UNITS FROM NEARBY BASES WERE MOVED INTO STAGING AREAS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF CITY AND INCLUDED THREE ARMORED VEHICLES (FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO HERE AS TANKS). IN VIEW OF THIS, DEMONSTRATION DID NOT TAKE PLACE AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND PROSPECTIVE DEMONSTRATORS.

4. IN RELATED BUT SEPARATE EVENT, GLORIA DE CLARAMOUNT, WIFE OF EXILED UNO CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENCY IN FEBRUARY 1977, PUBLICIZED CALL FOR MASS AT THE EL ROSARIO CHURCH (JUST BESIDE PARQUE LIBERTAD) SCHEDULED FOR 12:30 P.M. FEBRUARY 28. MASS APPARENTLY WAS HELD AS SCHEDULED BUT ATTENDANCE ESTIMATED AT NO MORE THAN 200-300 AND SOME REPORTS INDICATE POLICE REFUSED OR LEAST DISCOURAGED ATTENDANCE.

5. COMMENT. EXTENSIVE AND HIGHLY VISIBLE GOES SECURITY MEASURES EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED WHATEVER ATTEMPTS MAY HAVE BEEN MADE BY BPR AND ITS SUPPORTERS TO HOLD PUBLICIZED DEMONSTRATION. THERE WAS WIDE SPECULATION BOTH WITHIN THE GOES AND GENERAL PUBLIC THAT BPR WOULD HAVE SOME FALL-BACK PLAN FOR CREATING SOME TYPE OF DISTURBANCE ON FEB. 28 BUT THIS ALSO FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THERE MAY BE SOME ROOM FOR CRITICISM OF GOES FOR PREVENTING DEMONSTRATION UNDER LAW OF PUBLIC ORDER. HOWEVER, DEMONSTRATION BY PEOPLE WITH ARMS WOULD HAVE BEEN UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN ANY CASE (SEE ARTICLE 160 OF SALVADORAN CONSTITUTION). GENERAL FEELING EXPRESSED BOTH IN MEDIA AND BY NUMEROUS EMBASSY CONTACTS INDICATE THAT GOES TOOK APPROPRIATE MEASURES AND SUCCESSFULLY NEUTRALIZED, WITHOUT ANYONE BEING HURT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE AT MOMENT, WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN SERIOUS CONFRONTATION. CONSENSUS ALSO IS THAT BPR AND ANTI-GOES FORCES SUFFERED SEVERE SETBACK BY ANNOUNCING PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AND BEING UNABLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH. NEXT LIKELY OPPORTUNITY FOR BPR AND OPPOSITION TO ATTEMPT CONFRONTATION WILL BE MARCH 12, ELECTION DAY AND FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF ASSASSINATION OF FATHER GRANDE, ALTHOUGH BPR MAY USE ANY OCCASION TO RECOUP LOSSES. LUBENSKY

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SECURITY, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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